# MONTANA WOLF PROGRAM WEEKLY REPORT

To: Interested Parties

From: MFWP Wolf Program Coordinator, Carolyn Sime

Subject: Wolf Program Activities and Related Information, July 12 – July 25, 2008

Contributors to the Montana Wolf Weekly are Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Universities, USDA Wildlife Services (WS), the National Park Service (NPS; Glacier NP; Yellowstone National Park will be reported in the Wyoming Wolf Weekly), US Forest Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Blackfeet Nation.

Highlighted activities relate to: monitoring, wolf – livestock interactions, outreach and education, research, law enforcement, and other miscellaneous topics of public interest. The Weekly Report will be available on each Monday, covering the previous week. It and other wolf program information (including the 2007 annual report) can be found at: <a href="http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html">http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html</a>.

# **Wolf Monitoring Activities**

Boyd, Whitehead, and Rich are working in the Spar Lake area near Troy. They are trapping for a suspected pack based on public and agency reports. They will also be working on Pulpit and Candy Mountain packs

On the 13<sup>th</sup>, Laudon and Wilson captured an adult male in the Squeezer pack and placed one of the University of Montana GPS collars. Laudon continued to work on a second uncollared pack in the Swan Valley.

In the 17<sup>th</sup>, Asher captured an adult male wolf from the Beartrap Pack. It was collared with a University of Montana GPS collar.

During the week of the 21st, Bradley and Adkins were trapping in the West Fork Bitterroot.

On the 18<sup>th</sup>, Ross conducted a monitoring flight in southwestern Montana.

On the 21st and 23rd, Smucker conducted monitoring flights in western Montana.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Asher conducted a monitoring flight in southwestern Montana.

#### **Wolf - Livestock Activities**

FWP and the Blackfoot Challenge are collaborating on a pilot range rider project in the Helmville area for at least six weeks and the project may be extended.

On 7/14 5 wolves from the Salish Pack (border pack w/ Montana and Flathead Indian Reservation) were observed chasing and killing a llama on an animal rescue ranch near Niarada. The ranch hand chased the wolves off and buried the llama. Earlier this spring, this pack was observed chasing a group of livestock in the same area. On 7/15, while scouting for this pack, CSKT and MT Wildlife Services discovered a freshly killed calf, with the cow nearby still trying to defend. The alpha male (NW 190) was very close. MT Wildlife Services set traps on the carcass. On 7/16 a 2 year old male (NW 348) was captured and shot. The remainder of the pack howled at personnel from approximately 300 yards away. MT Wildlife Services moved into the rendezvous site and called in the collared male and another wolf, and shot a 2 year old female (NW 349). The rancher who lost the calf on 7/15 discovered another calf badly injured on 7/16. Control is complete at this time.

On the 24<sup>th</sup>, WS confirmed that members of the Brooks Creek pack near Florence had killed two llamas and injured a third which had to be euthanized. This pack has stayed at lower elevations later in the season this year compared to last year and had previously killed 2 domestic calves and chased others in two separate incidents early in July. FWP had attempted to trap as well as haze the pack intermittently since April and has been unsuccessful. As a result of the llama incident, FWP authorized WS to kill up to four wolves that return to the area where the depredations occurred. FWP will continue efforts to haze the remaining members of the pack and the litter to higher elevations and away from livestock.

Efforts to remove the Freezeout pack ended on July 25<sup>th</sup>. A total of five wolves were killed between May 29 and July 25 (the end of the 45 day period in which lethal control is allowed under the 10j federal regulation). One to three adults and a litter of pups remain and no further sheep losses have been documented since June 11. Beginning in mid-May, WS had confirmed over 30 injured and dead sheep (some of the injured have since died) in three separate incidents on private land south of Dillon.

#### **Outreach and Education Activities**

On the 7<sup>th</sup>, Asher gave a presentation about wolves and wolf management at a gathering of the Gallatin Youth Group. About 25 attended.

On the 10<sup>th</sup>, Asher gave a presentation at the Living with Wildlife Workshop in the Madison Valley. About 30 people attended. She spoke about wolves, wolf management, and proactive

On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Laudon gave a talk at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Southwest Regional meeting. He talked about wolves, management, and the Montana program. About 50 people attended.

On the 25<sup>th</sup>, FWP issued a press release and completed updates to the FWP website wolf pages regarding the Court-ordered preliminary injunction and what it means for Montana. Visit the website to learn more: http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf.

#### **Research Activities**

Nothing to report.

### **Law Enforcement and Related Activities**

On the 13<sup>th</sup>, Laudon recovered the carcass of a wolf pup in the Squeezer pack territory. The carcass was sent to the FWP Wildlife Lab for a necropsy and it's under investigation.

On the 21<sup>st</sup>, Montana Department of Transportation found a dead wolf along Interstate 90 near Lookout Pass. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks assisted with carcass retrival and consulted with USFWS Law Enforcement. FWP confirmed that the wolf had injuries consistent with a vehicle collision. The adult female may have been a member of the Silver Lake pack, a group of wolves which is suspected to inhabit the Montana/Idaho border near Lookout Pass.

## Other

Wolf Litigation: On May 29<sup>th</sup>, Judge Malloy heard oral arguments in regards to a request for a preliminary injunction (would place the species back under federal regulations) while the main northern Rockies delisting litigation proceeds. On Friday July 18<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Federal District Court in Missoula, Montana, issued a preliminary injunction that immediately reinstated temporary Endangered Species Act protections for gray wolves in the northern Rocky Mountain DPS pending final resolution of the case. This includes all of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming, the eastern one-third of Washington and Oregon, and parts of north-central Utah. The FWS and the interveners are evaluating legal options regarding the Court's order and the ongoing litigation. In the meantime, wolves across northern Montana return to the "endangered" classification and wolves across southern Montana return to the "experimental" classification – also known in Montana as "split status." FWP decisions about wolf-livestock conflicts in the endangered area are guided by the 1999 Interim Control Plan. FWP decisions about wolflivestock conflicts occurring in the experimental area are guided by the 2005 and 2008 nonessential experimental population 10j regulations. Those regulations also guide what private citizens can to do protect their livestock. See the FWP website for important information and updates: http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html.

The Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program (LLRMP), which reimburses livestock producers for confirmed losses to wolf depredation, is now accepting online donations at <a href="http://liv.mt.gov/">http://liv.mt.gov/</a>. The new program, which is administratively attached to the Montana Department of Livestock (MDOL), was created by legislation passed in 2007. It replaces a successful program funded by Defenders of Wildlife for the past two decades. Legislation that created the program also established, but did not fund, a \$5 million trust that will ultimately fund

the compensation program as well as grants to help livestock producers prevent wolf-livestock conflicts and use non-lethal management techniques.

On June 12, the FWP Commission considered a proposal to establish a quota for a wolf season in the fall of 2008, pending a federal court ruling on a request for an preliminary injunction. The Commission approved a tentative wolf hunting quota of 75 wolves statewide. The comment deadline was July 18<sup>th</sup>. In light of the court order reinstating Endangered Species Act protections, FWP will withdraw the tentative quota from further consideration by the FWP Commission.

Also on June 12, the FWP also approved FWP to initiate formal rulemaking to remove the wolf from the state's endangered species list and reclassify it as a species in need of management. The proposed rule also spells out the manner and types of wolf control methods (lethal and non-lethal) that can be used to address wolf-livestock conflicts. Formal public hearings were held in Bozeman, Missoula, and Helena on jUly 16, 17, and 18<sup>th</sup> respectively. The comment deadline was July 25. In light of the court order reinstating Endangered Species Act protections, FWP is still considering whether to finalize the wolf-livestock guidelines portion of the proposed rule. The proposed rule is a state-level regulatory step that needs to be taken at some point in the future regardless of the injunction as they would replace federal regulations and apply whenever wolves are delisted. If FWP and the FWP Commission finalize the proposed rule, it would be superceded by the applicable federal regulations for as long as wolves remain listed under federal law.

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To learn more about Montana's wolf population, the Montana program and to help FWP monitor wolves by reporting wolf sign, visit FWP at: <a href="www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf">www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf</a>.

To anonymously report a dead or injured wolf or suspected illegal activity, call: 1-800-TIP-MONT.

To request an investigation of injured or dead livestock, call USDA Wildlife Services directly in western Montana / Helena area at 458-0106 or in eastern Montana / Columbus area at: 322-4303. Or call your nearest FWP representative to have your call referred to Wildlife Services.

If you have a confirmed or probable livestock loss due to wolves, USDA Wildlife Services will supply you with a copy of the Loss Reimbursement Application form. For more information, see <a href="http://liv.mt.gov/liv/LM/index.asp">http://liv.mt.gov/liv/LM/index.asp</a>. Or, contact the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program Coordinator George Edwards at the Montana Department of Livestock at 444-5609.

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